



May 17, 2004

Providence man pleads guilty to federal firearms charge

Leron Porter, of Providence, has pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm, admitting that he had a handgun on him when Providence Police approached him on North Main Street in November. Porter also admitted that he carried the handgun in relation to a drug-trafficking crime, having just sold crack cocaine to an individual.

The Office of the United States Attorney announced the guilty plea, which Porter entered on May 14 before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ernest C. Torres in U.S. District Court, Providence. Porter, of 102 Camp Street, is detained pending sentencing, which is scheduled for August 26. Porter has prior felony convictions that include a 2003 cocaine-trafficking conviction,

At the plea hearing Assistant U.S. Attorney Terrence P. Donnelly said that, on November 3, Providence police officers observed Porter make what appeared to be a drug transaction with another individual in the vicinity of North Main and 7th Streets. The detectives were at that location in connection with another investigation when they saw Porter make the transaction.

When detectives approached Porter, one of them knocked a handgun out of his hand. Porter fled the scene in a car, which became stuck in traffic, and then fled on foot. He was arrested on the roof of a YMCA building a few blocks away. Porter later admitted selling about 1.5 grams of crack cocaine to the other individual and to having the handgun – a .357 caliber revolver – on him when detectives approached him.

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Porter pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm and using a firearm in connection with a drug-trafficking offense. The latter offense carries a mandatory minimum five-year prison sentence that must be consecutive to any other sentence imposed. Being a felon in possession of a firearm has a statutory maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Federal sentencing is determined on the basis of guidelines that rely on such factors as the specific nature of an offense and a defendant's criminal background, if any.

Providence Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Donnelly is prosecuting it. The case was prosecuted under a **Project Safe Neighborhoods** initiative in which firearms cases are jointly reviewed by the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office to determine where best to prosecute them. Project Safe Neighborhoods is a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes and gun violence.

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